

need for a surrogate parent and, if need is found, for the appointment of a surrogate parent.

(b) The person appointed as a surrogate parent shall:

(1) Have no interest that conflicts with the interests of the child and shall not be a present employee of the school involved in the education or care of the child or a present employee of Office of Indian Education Programs;

(2) Have knowledge and skills that insure adequate representation of the child; and

(3) Wherever possible, be a member of the child's extended family, or if that is not possible, a member of the same tribe as the child.

(c) The surrogate parent shall represent the child in all matters relating to the identification, individual evaluation and educational placement of the child and the provision of a free appropriate public education.

(d) Surrogate parents may not be appointed for the sole purpose of representing parents at the IEP conference.

(e) Payment of fees for service as a surrogate parent does not, in and of itself, render a person an employee of the BIA.

§ 45.57 Conciliation/mediation.

(a) The school must make all reasonable efforts consistent with its obligations under this part, to resolve informally any ongoing disputes between the parent and the school.

(b) Prior to the initiation of a due process hearing, the Bureau shall attempt to intervene with the mediation process. The following is a statement which describes this technique.

(1) Mediation is a dispute resolution process which is non-adversarial in nature. It seeks not to declare winners or losers, but to find reconciliation between disputing parties. This process is conducted through the skills of a trained mediator. Its focus is the mutually satisfactory resolution of disputes. No third party acts as judge or jury. The parties themselves arrive at an assessment through the process. Mediation can be initiated by either a parent or the Bureau in order to resolve informally a disagreement with respect to the identification, evaluation, or

educational placement of, or the free appropriate education provided to an Indian child. Mediation shall consist of, but not be limited to, an informal discussion of the differences between the parties in an effort to resolve those differences. The parents and the appropriate school officials may attend mediation sessions between the parties in an effort to resolve those differences.

(2) Mediation must be conducted, attempted, or refused in writing by concerned parties of the handicapped child whose education is at issue before a request for, or initiation of, a hearing authorized by this part. Any request by the Bureau for a hearing shall state in writing how this requirement has been satisfied. No stigma may be attached to the refusal of the concerned parties to mediate or to an unsuccessful attempt to mediate. Mediation may not be used to deny or delay a parent's right to impartial due process hearing.

§ 45.58 Initiation of hearings.

(a) If the parent disagrees with any action taken by a school for which full and effective notice to parents is required by this part, a hearing may be initiated by the parent of a handicapped child or a child suspected of being a handicapped child, by sending a written request for hearing to the Agency Superintendent for Education. The Agency Superintendent for Education must acknowledge receipt of the written request within five (5) days of actual receipt.

(b) Hearings may be initiated by a school by providing full and effective notice to parents in any instance where, after reasonable efforts at conciliation, a parent either fails to provide written approval of a proposed action, or provides a formal disapproval.

(c) Whenever a hearing is initiated, full and effective notice of the initiation of the hearing must be provided by the hearing officer to all persons concerned.

(d) The written notice of hearing shall include:

(1) A statement of the date, time, place and nature of the hearing;

(2) A statement of the legal authority and jurisdiction under which the hearing is to be held;

(3) A reference to the particular sections of the statutes or regulations involved; and

(4) A short and plain statement of matters asserted.

§ 45.59 Hearing officers.

(a) A proposed hearing officer must be selected by the Agency Superintendent for Education within one (1) day of receipt of a request for a hearing, from a list established and maintained by the Agency.

(b) After selecting a proposed hearing officer, the Agency Superintendent for Education must, within three (3) days, give the parent(s) and the school full and effective notice of the name of the proposed hearing officer.

(c) The parent and school, each upon notice of the selection of proposed hearing officer, may request that the Agency/Area determine that the person so proposed is not impartial and may exercise one automatic disqualification during the appointment process. The Director shall resolve all challenges for cause (i.e., partiality).

(d) If the proposed hearing officer is automatically disqualified or found to be not impartial by the Director, the Agency Superintendent for Education must within three (3) days designate another person.

(e) Final appointment of a hearing officer occurs whenever a proposed hearing officer is selected by the Agency Superintendent for Education and the parent or the school fails to notify the Agency Superintendent for Education of a decision to challenge the impartiality of the proposed hearing officer or of a decision to automatically disqualify the proposed hearing officer (available only once for each party), or when the Director determines that no doubt exists as to the impartiality of a proposed hearing officer.

§ 45.60 Impartial hearing officer.

(a) A hearing may not be conducted:

(1) By a person who is an employee of a school, or of the BIA, who is involved in the education or care of the child, or

(2) By any person having a personal or professional interest which would conflict with his or her objectivity in the hearing.

(b) A person who otherwise qualifies to conduct a hearing under paragraph (a) of this section is not an employee of the Agency solely because he or she is paid by the Agency to serve as a hearing officer.

§ 45.61 Hearing reports.

(a) Any party to a hearing has the right to:

(1) Be accompanied and advised by counsel and by individuals with special knowledge or training with respect to the problems of handicapped children. The cost for such counsel or expert representatives shall be borne by the party employing them;

(2) Present evidence and confront, cross-examine, and compel the attendance of witnesses;

(3) Prohibit the introduction of any evidence at the hearing that has not been disclosed to that party at least five (5) days before the hearing;

(4) Obtain a written or electronic verbatim record of the hearing; and

(5) Obtain written findings of fact and decisions.

(b) Parents involved in hearings must be given the right to:

(1) Have the child who is the subject of the hearing present; and

(2) Open the hearing to the public.

§ 45.62 Timelines and convenience of hearings and reviews.

(a) The Agency shall ensure that a final decision is reached by the hearing officer and a copy of the decision is mailed to each of the parties within 45 days after receipt of a request for a hearing.

(b) A copy of the decision made in a review conducted by the Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs must be mailed to each of the parties within 30 days of the request for a review.

(c) The hearing or reviewing officer may grant specific extensions of time at the request of either party.

(d) Each hearing and each review involving oral arguments must be conducted at a time and place which is reasonably convenient to the parents and child involved.